


RESILIENCE SERIES

# Remote Work Guide

How to promote collaboration and maximize  
productivity in a remote environment

**Team Building Through Change**  
Session Guide

A decorative blue arc is positioned in the bottom right corner of the page, partially overlapping the dark blue footer area. It is composed of several segments separated by thin white lines.

# Preparing for remote work

Getting your team set up to work remotely means thinking beyond logistics and technology. Helping your employees adopt the right mindset and supporting them will impact their experience and productivity. The type of support individuals will benefit from will differ based on their needs.

## How to use this guide:

The Remote Work Guide is intended to provide leaders, teams, and individuals with content to improve their remote working experience. This guide is broken into three main sections:

- Managing remote teams
- Tips for improving remote work experience based on Factors
- General tips for remote work

## Managing remote teams

Your role has never been more important than it is right now. Things are changing by the minute, and senior leaders are making strategic decisions. Make sure you're passing that information along to your teams as you have it. Organize a daily stand-up where you check in with your team members. This is a good time for you to pass along information, gather questions, and ask how each other is doing.

Tailor your communication styles as needed. If you have team members who are more extraverted, they might be struggling with the reduced in-person contact of remote work. Reach out to these people frequently.

Everyone is stressed right now; some people are scared, and others are sick. Take the time to ask how your team members are doing outside of work. That sort of empathy can go a long way. Make sure they know they can reach out to you when they need help, or even just a listening ear.

Finally, if they have kids at home while trying to work full-time, be accommodating. Have a conversation with these employees about what you need from them and what they're able to do. Be supportive if they need to flex their work time.

## Socialize and organize

People may be restless right now, unable to leave their homes and faced with limited social interactions. Encourage them to connect with each other. Set up a buddy-system. Use Zoom, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, FaceTime, etc., and schedule virtual lunch or coffee dates. At PI, we've even had virtual game nights. Social distancing does not mean socially disconnecting. Stay engaged with each other.

Senior leaders: Now is your time to shine. But you'll need to make a concerted effort at engaging your people. Cornerstones of solid engagement practices include:

- Trust in senior leadership
- Open, honest communication
- Clearly defined change management practices

You may not even know all the changes the business will incur to ride the wave, but it is imperative that you remain transparent. Speak to hiring freezes as they occur. Be transparent about other things you're doing, such as cost-cutting measures and evaluating future revenue targets. And be clear and upfront when you make changes, such as shifting your overall company strategy.

Above all, communicate, communicate, communicate. The breakneck pace of news and current events can be anxiety-inducing. Be the steady stream of communication your teams can rely on. Be present. Be transparent. Stay connected. Stay engaged.

## **As a manager you will need to:**

1. Determine how you'll communicate to your distributed team
2. Help your employees adopt the right mindset
3. Support employees to develop healthy remote work habits

## **Determine how you'll communicate to your distributed team.**

The guide to Surviving an Economic Downturn With Talent Optimization put it best: "With a rapidly-evolving pandemic like COVID-19, decisions need to be made quickly. Keep up the frequent, candid communication over time to make sure people feel informed and their concerns are addressed. This is especially important as you transition to remote work.

Good communication creates a sense of family and community. Some employees are wired to work with and through others; they'll need extra support and check-ins during this time. Employee behavioral data will help you understand how each individual is wired so you can tailor communications accordingly."

## **Here are seven potential avenues you can leverage for remote communication:**

1. Designate a new Slack channel for updates.
2. Leverage video to share important messages.
3. Send emails to keep the appropriate people in the loop.
4. Host a town hall where employees can share their concerns and ask questions.
5. Put together FAQs explaining how to fill out timesheets, which expenses to cancel or request refunds for, etc.
6. Live stream all-company meetings to help your employees stay informed.
7. Create a section on your internal site where people can upload new process docs.

## **Help your employees adopt the right mindset**

A study conducted with 102 government agency employees provided interesting insights on how working from home impacts the employee experience.

The researchers found that employees who were more open to the experience were more positive about remote work. They also discovered that employees who were more socially connected outside of work had a more positive experience.

What can you take away from this study for your own employees?

Help your employees look on the bright side. Remote work may very well not be their preference, but it's a better alternative to being put on furlough. Encourage them to make the best of the situation through the tools at their disposal.

Make sure managers are connecting with their direct reports. This shift in how work is conducted can shake people up. Have your managers connect with their direct reports regularly in the first few days of your transition to ease anxiety.

Encourage employees to stay social. Social distancing doesn't mean you can't be social; it just means you have to maintain a physical distance. Host virtual game nights, happy hours, or social hangouts to provide employees with the social interactions they need while they're separated by distance.

## **Support employees to develop healthy remote work habits.**

As employees transition to working from home indefinitely, they'll need to learn new habits.

When working in the office, there's a pretty clear delineation to the day: When you arrive at the office, you start working. When you leave the office, you stop working. It's not quite so clear at home. Help your employees establish boundaries in their new work environment so they have a clear start and end to their days.

You'll also want to support them in navigating changes in communication. In the office, it's easy to swing by someone's desk to ask a quick question. In a digital workplace, that communication vehicle isn't the same. Help your team establish new communication guidelines and expectations so they can stay in touch about major decisions, brainstorming, and other forms of collaboration.

Finally, the office provides natural breaks. Whether it's taking a stroll to a close-by coffee shop with a colleague or stopping for some water-cooler chat, there are ebbs and flows to the day. Your employees may need to create artificial breaks throughout the day to step away from their computer and reorient themselves. Computer apps like Time.Out or Stretchly can help with this, as can team efforts to track steps or other physical activity while in isolation. Encourage employees to take time to connect with each other—both formally and informally.

Use the following tables to help employees get the most out of their remote work experience according to their strongest Factors.

# Tips for improving remote work experience based on Factors

## Lower A

### Tips for improving your remote work experience if you have a lower A Factor

- ❑ When you aren't in person, you may need to assert yourself more to make your voice heard. Speak up when you have something to say.
- ❑ Take time to connect with others to understand their work circumstances and determine how to most effectively collaborate.
- ❑ Recognize your peers for a job well done using tools available to remote employees.
- ❑ Connect regularly with your manager to check on your progress in accomplishing tasks and engaging remotely.
- ❑ Communication can take longer when having to wrangle all impacted parties across various channels. Instead of asking people's opinions when a decision needs to be made, offer options from which they can choose.
- ❑ When multiple options need to be worked through prior to making a decision, send those options out ahead of time by email or a message so colleagues can process them prior to the meeting.
- ❑ Set yourself up for success. If you don't have something you need to do your job remotely, be sure to speak up.

### Tips for managing lower A individuals during remote work

- ❑ Provide opportunities for them to collaborate with others.
- ❑ Praise their effectiveness for working cohesively and effectively.
- ❑ Provide them with guidance regarding best practices for remote work.
- ❑ Encourage the employee to share remote work best practices with others when you observe them taking place.
- ❑ Help the employee embrace the discomfort and lack of harmony that can come with working remotely.
- ❑ Encourage them to push outside their comfort zone. Task them with independently solving problems that may arise from remote work.

## Higher A

### **Tips for improving your remote work experience if you have a higher A Factor**

- ❑ Seek out opportunities to lead remote projects, whether within your own team or cross-functionally.
- ❑ Take ownership over solving problems others may have when working remotely.
- ❑ Create opportunities to learn new skills and take on different types of tasks that may be more challenging to accomplish in a remote setting.
- ❑ Check in with teammates who don't feel as confident or self-assured about the notion of remote work.
- ❑ Remind yourself that effective remote work is an adjustment for everyone. Try not to compete with others regarding who is best at it.
- ❑ Take some opportunities to work collaboratively with other remote workers, rather than solely on your own.

### **Tips for managing higher A individuals during remote work**

- ❑ Give them autonomy over how to perform their work in a remote setting.
- ❑ Recognize them for their successes and accomplishments as they relate to working remotely.
- ❑ Challenge them with tasks and assignments that might be more difficult in a remote setting.
- ❑ Set the tone that although the employee may be physically alone in their work location, there is still a need to collaborate with others.
- ❑ Encourage the employee to go easy on their peers who are not as confident about working remotely. They should try to help rather than compete.
- ❑ Encourage the employee to embrace small, repetitive tasks that may come along with managing their workspace, rather than viewing them as burdensome.

## Lower B

### **Tips for improving your remote work experience if you have a lower B Factor**

- ❑ Consider the benefits of remote work and how you can best use your skills when interacting with others remotely.
- ❑ Look into best practices for working remotely.
- ❑ Privately reflect on your effectiveness and what you continue to learn about remote work.
- ❑ Take the time to connect with your colleagues virtually. Don't let remote work be a reason to reduce communication.
- ❑ Make sure you continue to contribute in virtual meetings. Challenge yourself to speak up.
- ❑ Ensure you maintain connections with colleagues you know but may not work with every day.

### **Tips for managing lower B individuals during remote work**

- ❑ Encourage them to work in a disruption-free setting.
- ❑ Share objective feedback regarding their remote performance.
- ❑ Give them the freedom to connect with others at the frequency and pace they choose.
- ❑ Remind the employee of the benefits of periodic interaction with other remote employees, regardless of the frequency or topic of conversation.
- ❑ Encourage the employee to share their thoughts and opinions with others when reflecting about the nature of remote work.
- ❑ Encourage the employee to ask questions and learn from colleagues working in different locations to establish trust more quickly.



## Higher B

### Tips for improving your remote work experience if you have a higher B Factor

- ❑ Connect with peers across the organization on a regular basis.
- ❑ Encourage collaboration among others on your projects who work in different locations.
- ❑ Share your enthusiasm for remote work with others.
- ❑ Take the opportunity to reflect privately on your own remote work practices and how they can be improved.
- ❑ Do not judge colleagues who don't feel the need or desire to socialize via the means available to remote workers.
- ❑ Be sure to consider the facts around the effectiveness of remote work, rather than just your feelings toward it.

### Tips for managing higher B individuals during remote work

- ❑ Provide them with opportunities for social interaction
- ❑ Recognize them for success with remote-work-related challenges
- ❑ Create opportunities for them to influence others
- ❑ Encourage the employee to share objective findings about remote work, as well as their own feelings and opinions.
- ❑ Ask the employee to take time out of each week to work independently and without disruptions from remote work communication tools.
- ❑ Provide the employee with private recognition of their successes. Remind them that remote work does not always allow for public, large-scale recognition.

## Lower C

### Tips for improving your remote work experience if you have a lower C Factor

- ❑ Take on a variety of tasks to prevent burnout.
- ❑ Set expectations with collaborators regarding work pace.
- ❑ Give yourself credit with regard to the challenges associated with remote work.
- ❑ Stay focused on work all day. It may be easy to get distracted by other things that need to be done around the house, so create a realistic list of tasks that need to be accomplished by the end of the day, and stick to it.
- ❑ Take a step back and make sure you have your priorities right. Some tasks may seem more urgent or be more enticing to work on, but they may not need attention right away. Talk to your manager about the timeline for your work and make sure you are staying on schedule.
- ❑ Make an effort to be friendly and agreeable to others, both in messages and in meetings. Sometimes internet communications can make people seem more terse than they actually are trying to be. Take the time to consider how your message will be received by others before pushing send.

### Tips for managing lower C individuals during remote work

- ❑ Give this employee a chance to multi-task. They will embrace the variety it gives them while staying productive.
- ❑ Add some pressure to this person's day-to-day routine. Higher intensity work will help keep this person engaged.
- ❑ Communicate clear goals for this employee's work.
- ❑ This person tends to work quickly all of the time, so help them avoid burnout by reminding them to take breaks and slow down every now and then.
- ❑ Help this person stay connected with others. Their quick style and fast interpersonal communications may mean that their relationships suffer when they work remote.
- ❑ Encourage this person to maintain awareness of everything else going on with the team. It can be tricky to stay on top of everyone's projects when the team is working apart from one another. This person may also not want to take the time to stop and listen to what everyone else is working on. Encourage them to do this so that they are aware when someone else's work impacts theirs.

## Higher C

### Tips for improving your remote work experience if you have a higher C Factor

- ❑ Stay focused all day long, despite the many distractions that come with remote work.
- ❑ Help to establish group processes that work for everyone. Sometimes, an individual's voice can be lost when everyone is making decisions remotely. Be a champion of making sure everyone has the chance to be heard when it comes to group decisions that will impact them.
- ❑ Communicate with others when you need help, and offer support to others frequently. When everyone is remote, it can be hard to tell when others need help, so explicitly offering help and being clear when you need it is essential.
- ❑ Be flexible when people reach out to you during the day. Although you have a natural drive to work steadily, others do not and may reach out to you with questions or even just to chat during the day. Take this opportunity to connect with your coworkers.
- ❑ Be prepared to deal with time pressure when it arises. It may feel different because you will be working on tasks by yourself, but remember that you have teammates who are counting on you to get the job done on time.
- ❑ When working remotely, others may not be aware of just how much work you have on your plate, so work on balancing many tasks at the same time.

### Tips for managing higher C individuals during remote work

- ❑ Push this person to help the rest of the team. Calm and stable, this person excels at supporting others.
- ❑ Give this person the chance to bring the team together. This person is great at creating a collaborative environment that allows others to connect, and this person will do it well even when the team is remote.
- ❑ Allow this person to help shape group processes.
- ❑ Keep this employee in the loop. The limited channels of communication involved in work may result in this employee feeling unexpectedly disconnected from others and/or wondering if they are up-to-date on any decisions that have been made that could result in changes to their work.
- ❑ Set clear timelines before projects begin. This employee works at a steady pace, so allow them to plan the amount of time that they need in order to get work done on time. Set the expectation in advance that unexpected changes to the schedule may occur. Planning for unexpected schedule changes, even when unsure of what those changes will be, will help this employee tackle them like a champ.
- ❑ Keep your communication positive. This employee is agreeable and thoughtful, and may overinterpret remote communications that seem brief or blunt. Even a simple email request may come across as frustrated or intense simply because it is short.

## Lower D

### **Tips for improving your remote work experience if you have a lower D Factor**

- ❑ Take the time to appreciate the flexibility that comes with remote work.
- ❑ Serve as a role model to others in your willingness to take on new, last-minute tasks, and work around processes that might be different than they would be in person.
- ❑ Take advantage of the opportunity to set your own schedule and prioritize your tasks on your own.
- ❑ Challenge yourself to adhere to more rigid processes that promote the effectiveness of working remotely.
- ❑ Approach your work with more precision than you might if working on-site, as there may be less opportunity for collaborative revisions in remote work settings.
- ❑ Consider the implications of working remotely on how people understand and interact with you; some might not be as receptive to spontaneity or nonconformity.

### **Tips for managing lower D individuals during remote work**

- ❑ Give the employee the freedom to dictate their own working experience in terms of timing and methods used.
- ❑ Attempt to give the employee as little oversight as possible.
- ❑ Praise the employee for their willingness to do things differently than what has been done before.
- ❑ Encourage the employee to brainstorm the benefits of process and organization when employees are working in different locations.
- ❑ Identify a specific skill for which the employee can provide expertise to others that is especially valuable in remote work.
- ❑ Remind the employee that others may take a more serious and focused approach to remote work, and they should keep this in mind when working with collaborators.

## Higher D

### Tips for improving your remote work experience if you have a higher D Factor

- ❑ Take advantage of your knack for process to ensure things don't slip through the cracks now that people are all working in separate locations.
- ❑ Offer to help outline a workflow for jobs to be done remotely that used to be done face to face.
- ❑ Remind colleagues of ways to get work done that will be especially helpful across remote teams.
- ❑ Keep yourself adaptable to changes in process that may occur when working remotely.
- ❑ Understand that, due to working in a remote location, you might not be able to keep up with developments, process changes, and organizational news as readily as you would should you be working on-site.
- ❑ Be patient with errors or lower attention to detail on behalf of others who may lack focus for such matters, and offer to help.

### Tips for managing higher D individuals during remote work

- ❑ Provide very clear expectations and guidelines around work to be accomplished, even though you may work in different locations.
- ❑ Give the employee the opportunity to develop skills in a particular area, encouraging them to be seen as an expert.
- ❑ Encourage the employee to be seen as a resource for quality and thoroughness of work, which has the potential to falter when employees work across different locations.
- ❑ Help the employee embrace the flexibility of remote work, encouraging them to move away from strict structure all the time.
- ❑ Provide the employee with details and updates, but help them to grow comfortable with the uncertainty that comes along with remote work.
- ❑ Given the nature of remote work-based tools for communication, encourage the employee to adapt a more informal style when communicating with others.

# General tips for remote work

## Work environment/setup

- Have a dedicated work space that's clean and free of distractions. What's more, try to separate this space from the idea of "home" as much as possible. That way, when working, you're not preoccupied thinking about that sink of dirty dishes or pile of dirty laundry.
- When setting up your work space for the very first time, do so the night before. That way, all you need to do in the morning is turn on the computer. This helps avoid "Shoot! This isn't working the way I thought it would" moments.
- Make sure you have strong Wi-Fi to support your work. If you're in sales or have frequent meetings, you need an internet connection that'll support latency-free audio and video calls. Be sure to call your local provider to iron out these issues ASAP.
- Have the right equipment. This will differ by person and by job. But make sure you can replicate whatever workstation you have at the office at home. If you normally use a headset and keyboard, you should use a headset and keyboard when remote. If you use multiple monitors at the office, you should have a dock and multiple screens at home, too.
- Be comfortable, but not too comfortable. It may sound nice to work from a sofa or loveseat. But hunching over a laptop for long hours isn't great for posture. What's more, you may be tempted to turn on the TV—or even doze off if you didn't sleep well the night before. Instead, find a suitable "home office" space for yourself. You may not have a desk at home you can work at—and that's fine. Even sitting at a regular table and chair can help you stay focused.

## Productivity tips

- At the beginning of the day, make a to-do list of what you need/want to accomplish. Prioritize the tasks that are most important, and budget your time accordingly.
- Use a tool like the Pomodoro Technique. This technique has you organize non-meeting time into 25-minute work sprints. You then separate each of these sprints with shorter, five-minute breaks. This lets you stay focused on the task at hand without burning yourself out.
- Mute Slack notifications if you need to. If someone has an urgent request, they can always reach you via email. (Slack users can also push notifications via Slackbot—just be careful not to abuse it!)
- Go through the same rituals you do when in the office. Get dressed in the morning. Eat your lunch at your usual time. Go out for a walk and get your Fitbit steps in.
- The more your remote working days feel like your office ones, the more comfortable—and focused—you'll be.

## Meeting tips

- Include a video conferencing link in every meeting invite. When looking to accommodate a group of remote employees, this is typical etiquette. But when looking to successfully manage a remote team, it's critical.
- Also include links to any relevant materials (e.g., Jamboard, Google Drive, Miro). This'll allow you to make the most of your meeting time.
- Set alarms for meetings so you show up on time. Meeting at 10:00am? Set an alarm for 9:59am to remind you to jump on Zoom or an equivalent service you use.
- Once in a meeting, mute yourself when not talking. This helps to reduce background noise and keep distractions to a minimum.

## Physical and mental health

- Make sure you eat. It's easy to get preoccupied with work, but don't forget a proper breakfast, coffee (or whatever wakes you up), lunch, and snacks. Otherwise, you're bound to sabotage your day.
- Also take regular breaks. Use an app like Time Out to remind you to periodically take a breather. Working from home, you spend pretty much your whole day looking at a computer screen. Get away from it every once in a while!
- Invest in a pair of blue light or computer glasses. With so much time in front of the computer, it's also important to protect your eyes from strain. Even if you don't have a pair at your disposal, there are plenty of software programs (such as "f.lux") that can help eliminate blue light.
- Set boundaries for when you start and end your day. Set limits for yourself—determine when it's work time and when it's not. If you decide to close your laptop at 6pm, don't open it again until the next day.

## Interacting with colleagues

- Maintain your typical "water cooler" conversations. First thing in the morning, connect with a teammate over Slack/video conferencing for five to 10 minutes. Ask them how they're doing, learn about their weekend plans, etc.
- Learn to love Slack. Not just for group chats and direct messages—but also for quick 1-on-1 calls. This can help maintain contact with the people you'd normally just turn to at the office to brainstorm with. Plus, it's much faster than setting up a Zoom meeting.
- Find out your colleagues' preferred communication style. Ask them how they'd prefer to connect when there's a question or something to talk through. Should I ask via Slack? Throw time on their calendar?
- Spend time with the people around you. As we learn to practice social distancing, it can be especially hard on those used to face-to-face interactions. Take the opportunity to spend extra quality time at home with your family.

## **Working with family/children at home**

- Prevent interruptions with a designated work zone. When you have a family—particularly children or teens—at home when you’re working, having an “off-limits” work space can help prevent interruptions.
- Set expectations with other people in your home. Let your family know that just because you’re home doesn’t mean you’re available. Communicate that during working hours—when you’re in work mode—that space is yours.
- Keep the music playing. Give your kids an hour-by-hour schedule of who’ll be the “DJ” on Spotify. When there’s music in the background, they will sing along.
- Design simple scavenger hunts for your kids. Just print pictures based on a theme (super heroes, cartoon characters, etc.). Then hide them around the house and give your kids a list of clues to help them find them. You’ll keep them busy—and give yourself time to focus.
- Plan a project your kids can work on over the next several weeks such as writing books, illustrating comic books, or recording a creative video series. Have them chip away at it each day.